

REMARKS

The above amendment and these remarks are responsive to the final Office Action of Examiner James S. McClellan, dated 11 Aug 2005.

Claims 1, 4, 8, and 9 are in the case, none as yet allowed.

35 U.S.C. 103

Claims 1, 4, 8, and 9 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Thompson U.S. Patent 6,668,253 in view of Johnson U.S. Patent 6,055,516.

Applicants traverse.

Thompson relates to a collection of entities (stores) within a common enterprise. Thompson teaches providing consolidated financial reports for an enterprise including a plurality of such entities. All of these entities are of the same enterprise. Thus, there is no association of the companies in a plurality of company groups by a central

END920000168us1

9 of 18

S/N 09/815,317

enterprise providing procurement services to a plurality of such companies, with common chart of accounts for companies within a company group that varies with respect to the chart of accounts for other company groups.

Johnson relates to a requisition and catalog system for a single enterprise, and does not address the problems of maintaining such a system for a plurality of customer companies associated in company groups having different charts of accounts.

With respect to the claims in the case, the Examiner focuses his analysis on claim 1 (which analysis he later applies to claims 4, 8, and 9). Following is claim 1 (in italics), with portions of the claim which distinguish Thompson and Johnson underlined.

Applicants' claim 1 states: "A *method for maintaining synchronization of ledger accounts between a back-end procurement system and a front-end requisition and catalog system on behalf of a plurality of customer companies of an enterprise providing procurement services to a plurality of company groups, each said company group including a different plurality of said customer companies, comprising the steps of:*"

The Examiner states: "Regarding claim 1, Thompson discloses a method of maintaining synchronization of

END920000168us1

10 of 18

S/N 09/815,317

ledger accounts between various systems comprising the steps of...". [Office Action, page 2]

The Examiner later observes: "Thompson fails to disclose the accounting system including a procurement system and a requisition/catalog system... Thompson fails to disclose maintaining data for a plurality of customer companies of an enterprise. It is noted that Thompson maintains data for companies associated with enterprise which are not "customer" companies." [Office Action, page 3.]

The Examiner is correct. Thompson does not teach maintaining data for a plurality of customer companies of an enterprise, nor does he teach an accounting system including a procurement system and a req/cat system.

The Examiner continues: "Johnson teaches the use of an accounting system that coordinates a procurement system and a requisition/catalog system (see column 5, lines 24-40). Furthermore, it is noted that Johnson's system maintains procurement data for a plurality of customer companies (see column 4, lines 40-50 and the paragraph bridging columns 4-5." [Office Action, page 3.]

Applicants traverse. Johnson does not appear to teach linking of accounting systems to a requisition and catalog (req/cat) system, neither at the point cited by the Examiner, nor elsewhere. This is what Johnson teaches:

END920000168us1

11 of 18

S/N 09/815,317

"Local computer 20 is also provided with a catalog database 30 comprised preferably of at least two vendor product catalogs. The catalogs, and hence catalog database 36, preferably include such information as part number, price, catalog number, vendor name or I.D., and vendor catalog number, as well as textual information and images of or relating to the catalog products. The nature of the business that the Customer using electronic sourcing system 5 conducts will determine which product catalogs are made a part of catalog database 36." [Johnson, Col. 4, lines 40-50.]

"Where the Fisher RIMS system is in use with electronic sourcing system 5, a host computer 10 located at a Distributor site is also provided, as shown in FIG. 1A. Host computer 10 controls all inventory, pricing and requisitioning operations of the Distributor's regularly stocked items using host pricing and inventory database 11. Host pricing and inventory databases 11 may include such information as: descriptions of the items and the quantities thereof available at a particular Distributor warehouse and at other Distributor warehouses; item records for each Product regularly sold by the Distributor; discount records by Customer; and cross-references from the Distributor's catalog number to its corresponding vendor's part (catalog) number and to similar corresponding catalog numbers of other vendors (suppliers or distributors) for the same Product."

END920000168us1

12 of 18

S/N 09/815,317

[Johnson, paragraph bridging columns 4 and 5.]

In Johnson, both the local computer and the host computer maintain requisition and catalog information, but there is no teaching of synchronizing of such information with ledger accounts, as set forth in the preamble of the claim and more specifically set forth later in the claim and discussed hereafter.

Applicants note that in the analysis of the preamble of claim 1, the Examiner does not apply either Johnson or Thompson to the definition of a company group (highlighted by underlining in the claim preamble recited above), each of which includes a different plurality of customer companies. This definition is further refined later in the claim.

Claim 1 continues: "...associating a plurality of said customer companies within a company group, said customer companies within said company group using a same chart of accounts which varies with respect to a chart of accounts associated with a different company group of customer companies of said enterprise;..."

The Examiner continues, reading Thompson as teaching: "...associating a plurality of companies within a company group, the companies using the same chart of accounts (see column 1, lines 48-51, "common chart of accounts");..."

END920000168us1

13 of 18

S/N 09/815,317

Applicants traverse. The Examiner does not read the underlined portion on either Thompson or Johnson. Even so, applicants note that while Johnson indicates that individual customers may have different collections of product catalogs, such are determined by the "nature of the business that the Customer... conducts" [Col. 4, lines 47-50], which is not by the company group, as required by the highlighted portion of claim.

Claim 1 continues: "...maintaining a requisition and catalog system at each said customer company;..."

The Examiner is silent on this point, reading neither Thompson nor Johnson on this element of the claim. While Johnson does refer to a catalog database 36 at local computer 20 [Col. 4, lines 41-50], a req/cat system as recited in the claim includes more than a catalog database, but also the ledger accounts more fully described with respect to the pushing step recited later in the claim.

Claim 1 continues: "...maintaining said chart of accounts in said procurement system at said enterprise; periodically extracting from said chart of accounts, account identification indicia and descriptive information for a given customer company..."

The Examiner continues, reading Thompson as teaching:

END920000168us1

14 of 18

S/N 09/815,317

"...maintaining a chart of accounts in a first system; periodically extracting from said chart of accounts account identification indicia and descriptive information for a given company (see column 25, line 40 - column 26, line 24);..."

Applicants traverse. Thompson provides a one ledger system for doing accounting processes for several companies under a single client, including adjustments. However, this is not what applicants do. Applicants maintain a ledger system at the enterprise level used by different customer companies under different clients (identified by company groups). When a customer uses applicants' front end system, applicants' system knows which company group pertains, and displays correct chart of accounts and ledger information for that company group. The claim specifies that customer companies are characterized by company group, and that concept is missing from Thompson (and also Johnson).

Claim 1 continues: "...communicating said account identification indicia and descriptive information to said requisition and catalog system for each said customer company of a given company group;..."

The Examiner continues, reading Thompson as teaching: "...communicating said indicia and information to a second system (see column 25, lines 44-46),..."

END920000168us1

15 of 18

S/N 09/815,317

Applicants traverse. The claim recites that the account information is communicated to the req/cat system for each customer company of a given company group. Thompson does not teach such, and the Examiner does not assert that Johnson does either (which it doesn't).

Claim 1 continues: "...at said requisition and catalog system, storing said indicia and information in a data store of valid general ledger accounts associated with said company group for said given customer company;..."

The Examiner continues, reading Thompson as teaching: "...storing said indicia and information in a data store of valid general ledger accounts associated with said company group for said given company (see column 25, lines 57-59)." [Office Action, pages 2-3.]

Applicants traverse. Thompson does not teach company groups, as previously discussed.

Claim 1 continues: "...associating commodity codes with said account identification indicia; pushing commodity code/account identification associations to all other companies in said company group of said given company; responsive to a user request for a requisition of a commodity, providing a selection list of valid account codes and descriptions authorized for purchase by users from companies within said company group."

END920000168us1

16 of 18

S/N 09/815,317

The Examiner cites no teaching in either Johnson or Thompson for the above claim limitations.

Consequently, while reserving their right to assert the lack of a prima facie showing of the appropriateness of combining Johnson and Thompson, it is applicants contention, that combining them as done by the Examiner does not teach applicants' invention as set forth in claims 1, 4, 8 and 9.

Applicants request that the rejection of claims 1, 4, 8, and 9 be reconsidered and withdrawn.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants urge that the case be passed to issue with claims 1, 4, 8, and 9.

The Application is believed to be in condition for allowance and such action by the Examiner is urged. Should differences remain, however, which do not place one/more of the remaining claims in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to phone the undersigned at the number provided below for the purpose of providing constructive assistance and suggestions in accordance with M.P.E.P. Sections 707.02(j) and 707.03 in order that allowable claims can be presented, thereby placing the Application in

END920000168us1

17 of 18

S/N 09/815,317

condition for allowance without further proceedings being necessary.

Sincerely,

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By



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END920000168us1

18 of 18

S/N 09/815,317